



## **Boston Pilot Nutrition Program: Chefs in Schools**

Chapter 197 of the Acts of 2010 an Act Relative to Child Nutrition, Section 8 directs the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to evaluate the success of Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger's Chefs in Schools initiative. The program was established in 2007, as a pilot within Boston Public Schools. The goal of the initiative was to hire a professional chef to develop and serve nutritious, cost effective, student friendly meals that would be presented in a sensory appealing environment, and to track consumption and participation trends.

October 2011



This document was prepared by the  
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

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# **Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education**

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October 2011

Dear Members of the General Court:

Pursuant to Section 8 of Chapter 197 of the Acts of 2010, entitled An Act Relative to School Nutrition, I respectfully submit this initial evaluation of the Boston Pilot Nutrition Program: Chefs in Schools report in accordance with the following:

*“Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of elementary and secondary education shall evaluate the success of the Boston public school system’s pilot program, known as Chefs in Schools, to provide healthy, cost-effective meals to students during the school day. The department’s report shall identify other public schools in the Commonwealth in which similar programs may be implemented and shall include an estimated budget for implementing such programs. The Department shall report its findings to the joint committee on public health and the joint committee on education....”<sup>1</sup>*

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) has been charged with the task of evaluating the success of the Project Bread-Walk for Hunger’s Chefs in Schools initiative. The Program was established in 2007, by a partnership between Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger, the Office of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Boston Public Schools, and the Boston Public Health Commission, as a pilot within two Boston Public Schools. The goal was to determine whether student consumption of nutritious, child-friendly meals presented in a sensory appealing environment would increase over current consumption levels. The concept included the hiring of a professionally trained chef to develop and serve recipes using fresh, natural ingredients including fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs, whole grains, unprocessed meat and poultry, and low fat dairy products throughout the menus.

Chef Kirk Conrad, a professional chef and graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, was selected by the partnership to lead the initiative. Chef Conrad has an extensive culinary background that made him an outstanding choice for this project. The Chef was directed to develop a program based on financial integrity, which ensured the production of enhanced menu offerings in a cost-effective manner, while utilizing the existing food service equipment and staff located at each school site.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Text/Acts/2010/Chapter197>

Since its inception, the program has expanded to encompass eight Boston Public Schools, along with schools in Salem, and Lawrence. A second chef was hired for the 2009-2010 school year to assist with the expansion.

The Harvard School of Public Health, on behalf of Project Bread, conducted a plate waste study, for the initiative in the spring of 2009. Some of the initial findings showed that meals contained 50% more whole grains, and students ate more vegetables and wasted less food than students in the non-program schools.

The ESE believes that implementing an enhanced version of the Chefs in Schools program for school breakfast and lunch that incorporates a behavior focused nutrition education component through integration of the participating schools' nutrition services departments with ESE's curriculum frameworks and ongoing educational activities, may greatly increase the overall nutritional health of all students participating, while establishing an overall positive impact on educational achievement and outcomes.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

## **Table of Contents**

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<b>Introduction – An Act Relative to School Nutrition .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What is Chefs in schools?.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chefs in Schools Menus .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chefs in Schools Operational Environment .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Program Expansion .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chefs in Schools Study .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Program Participation Trends .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Program Budget Estimation.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Closing Remarks .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendix A: Chefs in Schools Menu Offerings .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix B: Targeted Outreach Communities.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Introduction – An Act Relative to School Nutrition

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education respectfully submits this Report to the Legislature pursuant to Section 8 of Chapter 197 of the Acts of 2010, entitled An Act Relative to School Nutrition:

*“Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of elementary and secondary education shall evaluate the success of the Boston public school system’s pilot program, known as Chefs in Schools, to provide healthy, cost-effective meals to students during the school day. The department’s report shall identify other public schools in the Commonwealth in which similar programs may be implemented and shall include an estimated budget for implementing such programs. The Department shall report its findings to the joint committee on public health and the joint committee on education....”<sup>2</sup>*

The Commonwealth signed into law on January 14, 1993 an Act establishing School Based Nutrition and Hunger Relief Programs. This bill, Chapter 414, of the Acts of 1992, directed the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) to establish a School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Outreach Program. The overall goal of this initiative is to increase participation in both programs, with stated emphasis on increasing the participation of children in low-income areas where food resources may be limited.

In 1994, Project Bread - The Walk for Hunger (Project Bread) was awarded the initial outreach contract. The Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) was designed by Project Bread as a result of this initial award. Since the inception of CNOP, ESE has collaborated successfully with Project Bread on a significant number of outreach initiatives related to school based nutrition, and hunger relief.

As previously stated, ESE has been given the task of evaluating Project Bread’s Chefs in Schools (CIS) initiative. This program is a partnership between Project Bread, the Office of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Boston Public Schools, and the Boston Public Health Commission. ESE has not participated in the Chefs in School program. The following report is based on the numerous resources, and press releases that have been published on the Chefs in Schools program, including those created by Project Bread, along with data provided by Boston Public School’s Food and Nutrition Department, and includes ESE’s comments on the feasibility of replicating this program within the Commonwealth’s schools.

## What is Chefs in Schools?

In 2007, the aforementioned partnership created the Chefs in Schools (CIS) pilot program. The rationale for the venture as described by Project Bread was that “over 74 Percent of the nearly 56,000 Boston Public School children qualify for free and reduced-priced school meals, which

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Text/Acts/2010/Chapter197>

include breakfast, and lunch. Clearly, many of these children come from families that struggle to put food on the table, and these students consume more than half their calories at school. This fact is driven by the high cost of living, and unemployment, making these children especially vulnerable to hunger, and under-nutrition. Boston children, like others in America, also face a rising obesity epidemic, driven by the availability of high fat, high sodium, cheap processed foods, which are particularly attractive to low income families looking for a way to stave off hunger.”<sup>3</sup> “School meals are a primary source of nutrition for low-income children, providing up to 55 percent of their daily caloric intake, and the Chefs in Schools Program links good cooking with real food and serves up meals that kids like to eat.”<sup>4</sup>

Project Bread’s mission for the program is “to prepare and offer appealing, cost-effective school breakfasts, and lunches that are healthy, and taste good.” One of the project objectives was to determine if children “would respond well to nutritious food that did not rely on frying, or excess fat, sodium, or sugar to enhance taste.”<sup>5</sup>

Chef Kirk Conrad, a professional chef and graduate of The Culinary Institute of America<sup>6</sup>, was hired by the partnership to lead the initiative. Chef Conrad has an extensive culinary background that made him an outstanding choice for the project.

The program was implemented initially at the Lilla G. Fredrick Middle School in Dorchester, and the Mario Umana Middle School in East Boston. Conrad, who goes by the name of “Chef Kirk,” was given the task of developing nutritious, cost-effective, kid friendly menus, and creating an environment that demonstrated to students, their teachers, and parents that school meals are crucial to students’ overall health and academic achievement.

## Chefs in Schools Menus

Chef Kirk’s professional training is inherently woven throughout his development of the CIS concepts. He uses fresh, natural ingredients whenever possible, which include daily recipes that incorporate fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, whole grains, beef, pork, poultry, and low fat dairy products within the menus. Chef Kirk took the existing school menus, enhanced the offerings by utilizing the basic concepts of kid friendly foods (such as tacos, pizza, and pasta), and developed nutritionally enhanced recipes that incorporate healthier non-processed ingredients. Below is a sample week’s worth of menus taken directly from Project Bread’s *Healthy School Lunch Q & A*, which is posted on their website:

- *Monday - Homemade pork tortillas served with brown rice and beans, peas and carrots, an apple, and fresh salad*

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<sup>3</sup> Project Bread: Press Release – *Healthy School Lunch Q & A*;  
[http://www.projectbread.org/site/DocServer/Healthy\\_School\\_Lunch\\_Q\\_A\\_II.pdf?docID=5181](http://www.projectbread.org/site/DocServer/Healthy_School_Lunch_Q_A_II.pdf?docID=5181)

<sup>4</sup> Project Bread: Press Release – *Governor Patrick enacted Project Bread supported bill, "An Act Relative to School Nutrition*;  
[http://www.projectbread.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=11186&news\\_iv\\_ctrl=0&abbr=newsroom](http://www.projectbread.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=11186&news_iv_ctrl=0&abbr=newsroom)

<sup>5</sup> Project Bread: *Chefs in Schools* ;  
[http://www.projectbread.org/site/PageServer?pagename=chefs\\_in\\_schools](http://www.projectbread.org/site/PageServer?pagename=chefs_in_schools)

<sup>6</sup> Project Bread: *Biography for Chef Kirk Conrad*; provided by Project Bread to ESE.

- *Tuesday - Whole-wheat pasta drizzled with homemade tomato sauce, with fresh peppers, onions, and meatballs, served with a whole-wheat roll, fresh salad with homemade dressing, and broccoli sautéed in olive oil*
- *Wednesday - Chicken sandwich on whole-wheat bread with lettuce, tomatoes, and pickles, served with sweet potato fries, vegetable soup, and blueberries*
- *Thursday - Homemade BBQ pork sandwich on a whole-wheat bun, served with fresh salad with homemade dressing, carrots sautéed in garlic and olive oil, homemade soup, and fresh apples and oranges*
- *Friday - Lasagna served with fresh salad with homemade dressing, peas and carrots, homemade soup, and fresh apples and oranges*

## **Chefs in Schools Operational Environment**

Utilizing the premise of learning styles theory, which when practiced, responds to the fact that individuals perceive, and process information in various ways, Chef Kirk provides “hands-on” training to food service staff throughout the course of daily meal preparation and service. Providing training using the approach of incorporating the four learning styles increases the successful outcome of techniques being retained and repeated daily by employees. This practice also achieves the cost-effective task of the program, since no additional training monies are required. Also, on the days the chef is present in a school, he provides an additional seven labor hours to the daily production schedule.

Chef Kirk enacted an extensive, but relatively low-cost marketing campaign for the CIS Program in Boston. The cafeterias were re-branded as BPS Cafés. Custom posters and signage were added to the walls, and some inexpensive serving vessels were purchased such as wooden bowls, baskets, and a wok for cooking demonstrations, and artificial greens and bamboo. See Appendix A for sample pictures of enhanced menu offerings.

At the inception, Chef Kirk reported that there was some initial resistance from food service staff to the new program at each of the schools. Staff was comfortable with their menus, and their production timelines, and were wary of the unknowns of “change.” Chef Kirk believes the success of the program is based on the desire and commitment of the food service staff “to own” the new program along with the philosophy and science behind the concept. He made subtle, slow changes when incorporating new menu items and operational adjustments. Kirk took the time to get to know all of the employees while working alongside and teaching them, he also recognized the limits of what was feasible for each facility.

## **Program Expansion**

In March of 2007, the Chefs in Schools program, now known as BPS Cafés, started in two Boston middle schools. In 2008, it was expanded to the Curley K-8 School in Jamaica Plain. In 2009, five additional schools were added to the program, including the Edison K-8 School in Brighton, the King K-8 School in Dorchester, the Higginson/Lewis K-8 School in Roxbury, the Tech Boston Academy. By popular demand from students who originally attended the two pilot schools, the CIS Program was incorporated into the Boston Arts Academy/Fenway High School.



For the 2009-2010 school year, Vin Connelly, a second chef, was hired, and immediately began working part-time one day a week at Tech Boston Academy at Wilson, and Higginson/Lewis K-8. In the 2010-2011 school year, the program is still expanding, and Boston Public Schools added East Boston High School and the McKay K-8 School. At the request of the other school districts, Chef Kirk brought his café concept one day a week to Lawrence High School, and Salem High School.

## **Chefs in Schools Study by Harvard School of Public Health**

In the spring of 2009, a study comparing two CIS and two non-CIS schools was conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) on behalf of, and funded by, Project Bread. The final report has not yet been released to the public pending acceptance/publication in a peer-reviewed research journal. However, a preliminary report of the results has been posted on Project Bread's website<sup>7</sup> and is summarized here. Additional information provided to ESE by HSPH<sup>8</sup> is also referenced below.

The study compared two Boston middle schools participating in the Chefs in Schools program to two middle schools receiving the district's standard lunches. The CIS schools selected to be part of the evaluation were Lilla G. Fredrick Middle School and Mario Umana Middle School, because they had implemented the program more than one year prior to the start of the study. To allow fair comparisons between participating and non-participating schools, the two non-CIS schools were selected on the basis of "matching" variables, including racial/ethnic composition and low-income proportions of the student populations. More detailed information regarding the methodology of the study can be obtained from Project Bread.

Some initial findings of the investigation included the following:

### **Consumption**

- Among students who took at least one serving of vegetables, students at the CIS schools ate *more* of those vegetables than students at schools serving traditional lunches.
- Students ate more of the food on their trays at the CIS schools than at those serving traditional lunches. This means that students wasted more food at schools that served traditional school lunches than at schools that served the healthier lunches.
- On average, students at CIS schools drank more milk than students at the control schools, including on days when white milk (versus chocolate milk) was the only option.
- Meals had over 50 percent more whole grains at the CIS schools compared to control schools. That is, refined white breads, pasta, and rice were replaced with whole wheat bread, whole grain pasta, and brown rice.
- Students given fresh or frozen fruits (like whole apples and oranges) ate a similar amount as compared with students given sweetened fruits (like peaches canned in syrup).

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<sup>7</sup> Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger Press Release: *Kids Like Eating Healthy Food*; [http://www.projectbread.org/site/News2?abbr=newsroom\\_&page=NewsArticle&id=10245&news\\_iv\\_ctrl=1103](http://www.projectbread.org/site/News2?abbr=newsroom_&page=NewsArticle&id=10245&news_iv_ctrl=1103)

<sup>8</sup> Communication between ESE and the Harvard School of Public Health occurred on December 16, 2010.

As Project Bread notes, “serving flavorful, appealing school meals can improve student nutrition while increasing school lunch participation. Project Bread recognizes that schools can have a significant impact on the nutritional lives of low-income children who rely on their school for two meals a day. As the Chefs in Schools [i]nitiative shows, students will eat nutritious meals that are presented in a way that is appealing.”

## Program Participation Trends

As discussed previously, the number of schools implementing the CIS initiative has increased from two to ten (eight in Boston, one in Salem, one in Lawrence) since its inception, showing that more Commonwealth students now have the opportunity to benefit from the program. In Figure 1, Project Bread has provided some data regarding average monthly lunch participation rates in the eight Boston schools implementing the program between September 2009 and January 2010. Here, the participation rate was calculated based on Boston Public Schools’ reimbursement claims figures<sup>9</sup>:

Figure 1. Average Monthly Participation Rates: Boston Public Schools

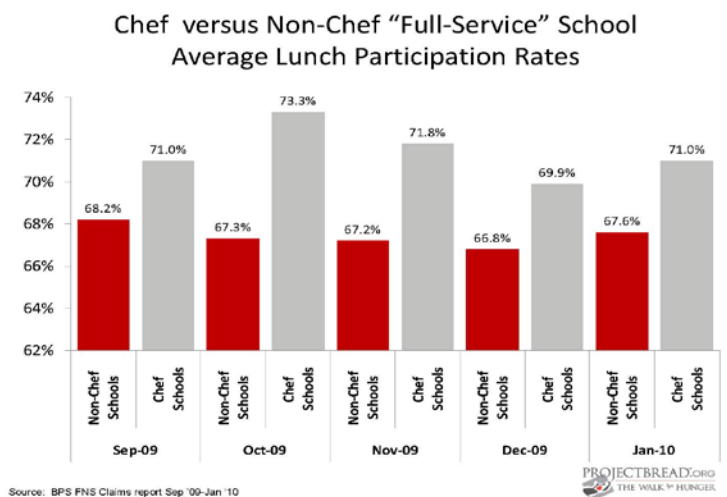


Figure 1 shows that although average participation rates at the eight Boston CIS schools fluctuated slightly month-to-month, they remained consistently higher than participation at the

<sup>9</sup> According to Project Bread, the participation rate was defined as the following:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{“Average Daily Lunches”} &= \frac{(\text{Total Reimbursable Lunches})}{(\text{Operating Lunch Days})} \\
 \text{“Average Daily Attendance”} &= \frac{(\text{Total School Enrollment for the Month}) * (\% \text{ Average Daily Attendance})}{(\text{Total School Enrollment for the Month})} \\
 \text{“Average Monthly Lunch Participation by School”} &= \frac{(\text{Average Daily Lunches})}{(\text{Average Daily Attendance})}
 \end{aligned}$$

Project Bread further noted to ESE that “the *average monthly participation by school* figures were then averaged by month and school type (Chef vs. Non-Chef) to arrive at the aggregated participation averages. For the purposes of this analysis, “Chef Schools” are defined as the ... eight schools where [CIS] had a presence [in 2009-10].... Non-Chef schools are defined as all other full-service cafeteria schools (38 schools).”

non-CIS schools.<sup>10</sup> Project Bread staff reported that on the day of the week that the Chef is present and creating enhanced recipes to be served, students seem to participate more readily. However, although the Chef was originally scheduled for two or more days a week on-site at each of the original two pilot schools, as the program has expanded, the Chef has had less availability to devote to each school. This has resulted in the enhanced menus not always being offered on days he is not present. This may have had an impact on maintaining the level of participation observed by Project Bread on Chef days. It is possible that student participation could remain high if the enhanced menus and a chef were available every day.

Boston Public Schools has also provided some data regarding yearly participation rates, as shown in Table 1 below. Annual participation rates have increased overall for five of the eight Boston CIS program schools during each respective period of implementation. The 2009-2010 school year saw several of the Boston Public Schools CIS schools involved in building merges, which increased their overall average daily lunch participation rates due in part to increased site enrollment.

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<sup>10</sup> Differences have not been evaluated for statistical significance.

Table 1. Average Yearly Participation Rates: Boston Public Schools

School Name	2007-2008				2008-2009					2009-2010				
	Avg FRPL %	Avg ADA	Avg Daily Lunch	Participation Rate %	Avg FRPL % <sup>11</sup>	Avg ADA	Avg Daily Lunch	Participation Rate %	% Change	Avg FRPL %	Avg ADA	Avg Daily Lunch	Participation Rate %	% Change
Umana	88%	575	485	84%	90%	530	462	87%	3%	93%	466	401	86%	-1%
Lilla Frederick	85%	596	408	69%	86%	569	413	73%	4%	88%	591	422	72%	-1%
Curley K-8	75%	703	485	69%	74%	647	529	82%	13%	75%	632	491	78%	-4%
Boston Arts Academy					62%	634	161	25%		63%	638	171	27%	1%
Edison					85%	334	225	67%		84%	668	513	77%	9%
Higginson / Lewis					89%	181	152	84%		85%	336	244	73%	-12%
King					83%	209	147	70%		87%	380	303	80%	10%
Tech Boston					82%	331	237	72%		86%	446	315	71%	-1%

Source: Boston Public Schools

<sup>11</sup> Free or reduced price lunch

## Program Budget Estimation

Exact costs related to planning and implementation of the Chefs in Schools program in the eight Boston schools are not yet available.<sup>12</sup> In determining cost estimations for implementation of the CIS program in any district, several variables would need to be determined by the participating school or district to adequately construct a program based on financial integrity. Boston Public School's Food Service Department has contacted local universities regarding industry base salary levels for professional chefs. Initial chef compensation should expect to fall within the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range based on experience, technical skills, and scheduling. ESE recommends the utilization of chef/manager positions to maximize cost benefits of employing qualified chefs for the program. Qualified food service staff may be utilized after an assessment of the individual's technical skill level. Some additional professional development may be required of this level of personnel. On a national level, the inception of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign's Chefs Move to Schools program may be utilized as a resource for obtaining a local volunteer chef as a cost saving factor.

Enhanced menu food cost should be planned and managed to fall within the range of the annual federal and state reimbursement rates (see Tables 2 and 3). USDA Foods (formerly known as USDA Commodities) and Farm to School collaborations should be fully utilized to ensure maximum food cost controls.

Table 2. National School Breakfast Reimbursement Rates for Fiscal Year 2011

<b>National School Breakfast</b>	<b>Federal Non- Severe Reimbursement</b>	<b>Federal Severe Need Reimbursement</b>
Paid Breakfast	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.26
Reduced Price Breakfast	\$ 1.18	\$ 1.46
Free Breakfast	\$ 1.48	\$ 1.76

Table 3. National School Lunch Reimbursement Rates for Fiscal Year 2011

<b>National School Lunch</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Federal Share</b>	<b>Total</b>
Paid Lunch	\$ 0.0525+	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.3125
Reduced Price Lunch	\$ 0.0525+	\$ 0.26 + 2.06	\$ 2.3725
Free Lunch	\$ 0.0525+	\$ 0.26 + 2.46	\$ 2.7725

School systems in which 60 percent or more of the lunches served in school year 2007-2008 were free or reduced price will receive an additional two cents per lunch for all reimbursable lunches for the 2010-2011 school year. Also, the USDA Foods commodity assistance level is at \$0.2025 per lunch served for 2010-2011 school year.

One of the main objectives of this program is to develop healthy menus that utilize all existing equipment to minimize program expenditures. Additional costs may be incurred to redevelop the

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<sup>12</sup> A cost analysis is currently under way by Project Bread.

dining atmosphere, and will vary for each participating school or district depending on the environmental marketing supports that are purchased such as signage, small wares, dining tables and seating.

CIS program enhancements should align with each school's required local wellness policy that was developed in response to the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265), and all USDA 7 CFR 210 meal pattern regulations.

## **Closing Remarks**

By serving nutritionally enhanced, child-friendly menus the ESE and Project Bread recognize that schools can have a significant impact on the nutritional health of low-income children who rely on meals served at school as their primary food source.

The CIS program clearly demonstrates that all students would benefit from student friendly meals that are presented in a sensory appealing environment.

The ESE believes that a replication of a CIS-type program for school breakfast and lunch into the Child Nutrition Outreach Program's 51 targeted outreach communities (see Appendix B) across the Commonwealth would greatly support the ongoing child nutrition outreach initiatives already being conducted for the School Breakfast Program, the Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Program, and the Summer Food Service Program in these communities. It is recommended that the initial core prototype be strengthened by incorporating a behavior focused nutrition education component that integrates the school nutrition services department with ESE curriculum frameworks through ongoing educational activities.

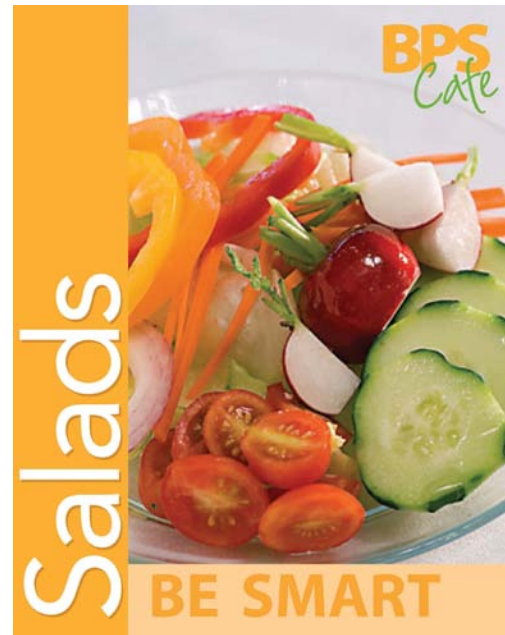
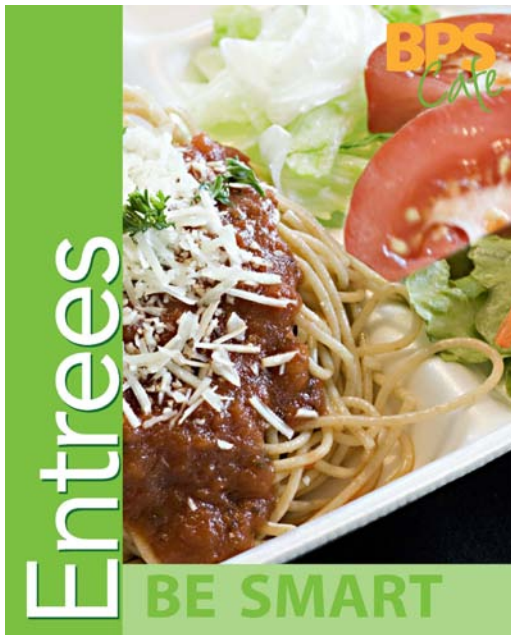
As of this writing, there are currently over 60 professional chefs across Massachusetts who have volunteered for the national Chefs Move to School initiative. These volunteer chefs have committed to partnering with their communities to "create healthy meals that meet the school's dietary guidelines and budgets, while teaching young people about nutrition and making balanced and healthy choices."<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the utilization of this national volunteer initiative may be a cost-effective way for schools to begin to incorporate more of the dietary guidelines into schools or districts' daily menus, and to educate students on how to develop life-long healthy eating habits through culinary exploration. This initiative is still in the implementation phase and needs continued evaluation. These efforts may greatly increase the overall nutritional health of all students participating, while establishing overall positive impacts on educational achievement and outcomes.

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<sup>13</sup> United States Department of Agriculture – Team Nutrition Healthy Meals Resource System - [http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal\\_display/index.php?info\\_center=14&tax\\_level=1&tax\\_subject=225](http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=14&tax_level=1&tax_subject=225)

## Appendix A: Chefs in Schools Menu Offerings



## Appendix B: Targeted Outreach Communities

Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger Targeted Outreach Communities		
<b>Adams/Cheshire</b>	<b>Greenfield</b>	<b>Randolph</b>
<b>Athol</b>	<b>Haverhill</b>	<b>Revere</b>
<b>Barnstable</b>	<b>Holyoke</b>	<b>Salem</b>
<b>Boston</b>	<b>Lawrence</b>	<b>Somerville</b>
<b>Brockton</b>	<b>Leominster</b>	<b>Southbridge</b>
<b>Cambridge</b>	<b>Lowell</b>	<b>Springfield</b>
<b>Chelsea</b>	<b>Lynn</b>	<b>Stoughton</b>
<b>Chicopee</b>	<b>Malden</b>	<b>Taunton</b>
<b>Clinton</b>	<b>Medford</b>	<b>Waltham</b>
<b>Dennis-Yarmouth</b>	<b>Methuen</b>	<b>Ware</b>
<b>Everett</b>	<b>New Bedford</b>	<b>Wareham</b>
<b>Fall River</b>	<b>North Adams</b>	<b>Webster</b>
<b>Framingham</b>	<b>Orange</b>	<b>West Springfield</b>
<b>Fitchburg</b>	<b>Peabody</b>	<b>Westfield</b>
<b>Gardner</b>	<b>Pittsfield</b>	<b>Weymouth</b>
<b>Gill-Montague</b>	<b>Plymouth</b>	<b>Woburn</b>
<b>Gloucester</b>	<b>Quincy</b>	<b>Worcester</b>